

Dilkes Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114920
Local Authority	THURROCK LA
Inspection number	311758
Inspection dates	6–7 February 2008
Reporting inspector	George Falconer HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	410
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lea Tyler
Headteacher	Mrs Maureen Wright
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	Garron Lane South Ockendon Essex RM15 5JQ
Telephone number	01708 852128
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Dilkes Primary School is larger than average and serves a community of mainly White British families, although this is gradually changing. The percentage of pupils taking free school meals is broadly in line with the national picture. The school has a lower percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups than that found nationally. There are very few pupils whose first language is not English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is higher than the national average. Attendance figures are in line with those typically found nationally. When they enter school, the skills, knowledge and understanding of children are lower than the expected level.

The school has gained the following national awards: Artsmark, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Activemark, International Schools Intermediate Award, Healthy Schools Award, Investors in People. The school has also gained recognition for its promotion of information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a school on a journey with very positive indicators illustrating its current, good levels of effectiveness and its strategic direction for the future. It is well led and managed by the leadership and management team. The headteacher and senior management team work conscientiously to provide good levels of support and direction to staff and pupils alike. The leadership of the headteacher is very good indeed. The chair of governors is knowledgeable about the school, its successes and its immediate and future needs. The governing body gives good support to the school.

The school is growing from strength to strength and has its sights set on raising achievement and attainment levels for all groups of pupils. Achievement of pupils overall is good with good levels of progress being made by the majority as they move through the school. However, the school rightly acknowledges that there are some groups of pupils whose scores in some areas are not yet high enough including those of the potential higher attainers. Further intervention strategies in writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1 and in English and mathematics in Key Stage 2 are now instigated to bring all pupils up to the national averages in those subjects.

Personal development and well-being are good and impact strongly on pupils self-esteem and confidence. The level of care, guidance and support offered to pupils is an outstanding feature of the school. Pupils are exceptionally well cared for and the levels of academic guidance and support are outstanding. Pupils make good overall progress in developing their personal qualities in readiness for their futures.

The quality of teaching and learning, including in the Foundation Stage, is good overall, and ranges from satisfactory to outstanding throughout the school. The quality of the curriculum is outstanding, particularly in the area of curriculum enrichment. The school has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage get a good start to their time at school. Most make good progress to reach broadly average standards by the beginning of Year 1. Strengths are in the way in which basic language and early number skills are taught and how clear links are made between different areas of learning. The two outside activity areas are used well to reinforce learning started inside the classroom and to develop skills further. Teachers help the children to settle to school by their warm caring approach. Children respond well and soon become confident and enthusiastic learners. The use of available data to track and monitor their overall progress and to ensure a smooth transition to work in Year 1 is just beginning to be effective.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards at Key Stage 1 in writing and mathematics, and at Key Stage 2 in mathematics, so that all pupils attain at least in line with the national averages.
- Improve the provision for the potentially higher attainers, so that standards reached at the higher levels are at least in line with the national averages.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Evidence from observations of pupils working, from discussions with them and from their books, shows that the majority of pupils are making good progress overall and are achieving well in most areas in relation to their abilities and starting points. This is due in the main, to good leadership at all levels and to the systematic approaches to monitoring, planning, and good evaluative processes. Where progress in learning is good, there is a direct relationship to the quality of teaching and learning.

By the time they reach the end of the Foundation Stage, many of them have made good progress with girls making slightly better progress than boys. Language for communication, reading and writing are still areas for further improvement and are already a focus in the school's strategy.

The school is striving hard to raise attainment levels to be at least in line with the national averages at the end of Key Stage 1. Boys' attainment levels in reading and writing are not as good as those of the girls or as good as those of boys nationally. However, boys do outshine the girls in mathematics. The percentages of higher attainers are improving against the national figures but they are still below average, particularly in writing and mathematics, at the end of Key Stage 1, more so in mathematics. Reading scores have improved significantly. The rate of progress is improving all the time and the attainment gap is narrowing between the school and the national averages.

By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils show good progress overall and reach levels of attainment in science that are broadly in line with the national average. Standards in English are rising well and are close to the national average, whereas mathematics standards are still below, according to the latest test results. The percentage of higher attainers at the end of Key Stage 2 is less than the national average in mathematics but broadly average for English and science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their moral and social development is good. The spiritual dimension to learning in the classroom is less evident. Pupils are very positive about the school and the school council makes a very good contribution. Pupils enjoy their lessons though they say that sometimes their learning is disrupted by other children's behaviour. This is a concern that some parents have put forward. However, behaviour is good overall with clear behaviour management strategies and processes in place. The pupils understand about healthy lifestyles and the school has the Healthy Schools' Award. Attendance is satisfactory. The pupils, particularly Year 6, make a very positive contribution to the school community. The establishment of Play Leaders, Corridor Crew, Lunch-time Crew and Peer Mediators is beginning to have a good impact on pupils' self-esteem and confidence. They are developing good generic skills such as responsibility and accountability that will help them in the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall and lessons range from satisfactory to outstanding with some areas that require improvement. Teachers manage pupils well and work hard to secure

pupils' good behaviour and positive relationships in their classes. Where teaching is most effective, teachers devise activities that enthuse pupils and make learning fun. The marking of pupils' work is regular and is often helpfully matched to the learning intended in the lesson. Pupils are increasingly being involved with the assessment of their own work. This helps them to appreciate how they could improve. Teaching assistants play a vital role in supporting various groups of pupils and they are keen to develop ideas to promote learning. Shortcomings are that occasionally teachers spend too long on activities which do not interest or challenge pupils sufficiently. Extension work for the more able pupils is not consistently provided. Nevertheless, some excellent practice was observed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding, particularly the curriculum enrichment. The special curriculum days increase pupils' enjoyment of learning. The school has worked hard and gained external recognition for art, ICT, and the International Schools Award. The curriculum includes many and varied opportunities for pupils to experience the richness and diversity of other cultures. This academic year, for example, the addition of steel drum provision has enhanced the curriculum on offer. The extra curricular activities are outstanding. A high percentage of pupils participate in at least one extra curricular activity. The whole school approach to 'Building Learning Power' is an extremely useful addition to the development of the curriculum. Evidence indicates that it is supporting pupils well through skills development that enhances the quality of their learning. The school strives successfully to be an inclusive school and adapts the curriculum to meet the needs of the majority of individuals. The very good provision for ICT is impacting strongly on pupils' learning in many curriculum areas, with all pupils recognising the importance of how it enhances learning opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support procedures are outstanding. The excellent care provided for all pupils is clearly part of the school's ethos. All adults know the pupils well and they have a shared concern for their welfare. The school provides an excellent range of support including intervention groups that meet pupils' needs well. Assessment information is collected and scrutinised regularly to inform next steps for individual pupils. This is used robustly to monitor the progress that pupils are making and to identify any elements of underperformance as well as to set pupils targets in their learning. Procedures for ensuring that pupils are safe and that all possible risks are minimised are thorough. The checks on the suitability of staff meet statutory requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher is a strength and is focused on improving the provision to promote pupils' progress in learning, enjoyment and the standards they attain.

Lead teachers regularly observe other colleagues and support colleagues well towards continued improvement, using demonstration and peer coaching.

All subject leaders monitor the quality of provision in their subject on a regular basis. The outcomes inform the school's strategic planning well. This is good practice that assists in raising attainment and has led the school to focus more closely on the needs of more able pupils. Monitoring and promotion of equal opportunities are good. The use of target setting to raise standards is good. Resources are deployed well to give good value for money.

Governors are well involved and carry out their statutory duties to good effect. They have a regular programme of visits to monitor the quality of provision in the school. Continuing professional development for staff is carefully targeted towards their needs in relation to analysis of whole school requirements. Good links are made with other schools and institutions to further develop pupils' awareness of life outside of the local community as well as to develop the staff knowledge and expertise. The school makes effective use of local services.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

8 February 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Dilkes Primary School, South Ockendon, Essex. RM15 5JQ

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited you recently. I was very impressed with the school and the way in which you were so helpful to the inspection team.

We were very pleased with the good learning opportunities that you have at school and with the way in which your headteacher and teachers work so hard to make continual improvements. They are constantly thinking of new and different ways to make learning more fun and enjoyable in order to help you learn.

You told us that you really appreciate your teachers and that they are very helpful and kind to you. The teaching assistants also do a great job. You told us that learning was fun and from what we saw, many of you were enjoying school. Your classrooms are stimulating and the computer suite and the laptops are really well used. It was easy to see how you enjoyed using them to research and learn about new and interesting things. We were impressed with the amount of extra activities you can choose at lunch times and after school and the fact that many of you take advantage of them.

Most of you are making good progress and those who really work hard are making even better progress. Still, there is always the need to put in that extra little bit of effort to reach for the highest marks and some of you are doing just that. However, some children need to spend their time a little better in lessons, to work harder and to behave well all the time.

We have talked about your learning with your teachers and they are very proud of what you achieve. They now want to give you even better opportunities to succeed as well as all other children across the country and they have some good ideas about challenging those of you who are more able to reach even higher levels.

Kind regards

George Falconer

Her Majesty's Inspector